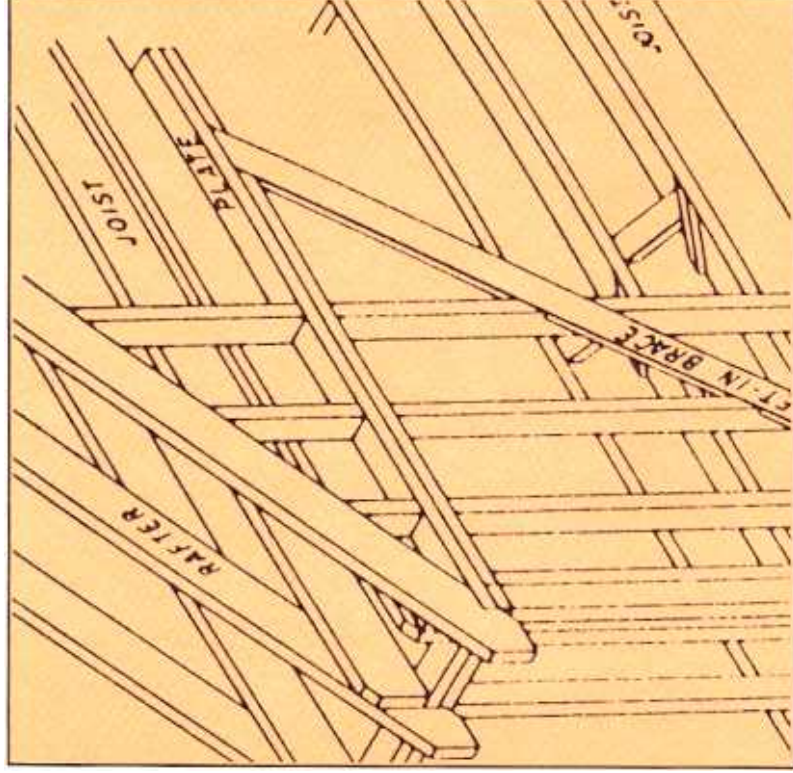


City of Las Vegas  
New Mexico

# BUILDING PERMITS

Why you need one  
and how to get it.



# **City of Las Vegas, New Mexico**

## **BUILDING PERMITS**

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# What You Need to Know About Getting a Building Permit

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## Introduction

Like other cities and states nationwide, Las Vegas and New Mexico adhere to a building permit program to help ensure the safety of constructed buildings and objects. The permit program assesses fees according to a project's value and incurs city and/or state inspections during the course of the building project.

Some home improvement projects do not require a permit, some require a city permit only and some require a state permit. In Las Vegas, many structures have been designated historic by the city or state or both — these structures may require review by the Las Vegas Design Review Board or the Historic Preservation Division of the State of New Mexico.

Before you begin any home or yard project, you should first determine what type of permit, if any, is legally required. This publication will help you do that. If you're still unsure whether you need a permit, contact the City of Las Vegas Community Development Department, 454-1401.

If your project does require a permit, the next step is to find out if your building has been designated historic or if the property lies within an historic district. This information will determine the permit process you'll need to take. The Community Development Department or the Citizens' Committee for Historic Preservation (425-8803) can help you determine historic designation.

## Why do I need a building permit?

Ensuring public safety is the number one reason for a city/state permit program. The approval of plans and inspection of work being done helps to make sure your home improvement project does just that: improves your property rather than becoming a liability due to faulty construction or materials.

Monitoring the development of neighborhoods and maintaining information on the current value of the structures and areas of the city are also reasons the City of Las Vegas requires building permits. Public officials need to know how the different areas of our community may be improving or changing in use or appearance. City codes are in place to guide development and change, and permits help assure well-thought community master plans are being followed. In addition, the city records the improvements or lack of improvements to buildings in order to establish equitable tax rates.

Sometimes the most compelling reason for an individual to check into the requirement for building permits is to follow the letter of the law. City ordinances explicitly state what requires a city and/or state permit. Failure to get a required permit can result in a fine of up to \$300 and/or 90 days in jail. If a state permit or special historic preservation approval is required for work already in progress, inspectors can halt all work on the project and levy a fine double what the original permit fee would have been.

Also, if a permit holder deviates substantially

from plans submitted to secure the permit, the city or state can stop work, assess extra fees or require reversion back to original plans at the permit holder's expense.

So for the sake of your safety, your peace of mind and your pocketbook, find out if you need a building permit before planning improvements to your property.

## What kind of work requires a building permit?

Any building or structure planned to be erected, constructed, enlarged, altered, repaired, moved, improved, removed, converted or demolished requires a building permit. This broad language is taken from the "Uniform Building Code," which the city adopted in its ordinance 10-1-1. It applies to most exterior projects and interior construction. Special permits and the use of a specialized contractor licensed by the city or state are required for most mechanical, electrical and plumbing projects. Licensed contractors are familiar with this requirement and should secure permits on your behalf, but don't leave it up to them entirely. Ask him or her about the need for a permit as you begin to plan the project.

Some projects require a city permit and not a state Construction Industries Division (CID) permit. If the valuation of the project is less than \$500, only a city permit is required. An exception might be if you're working on property that has been designated historic; see the special note on next page.

Examples of projects requiring only a city

permit include the following:

1. One-story detached accessory buildings used as tool and storage sheds, playhouses and similar, provided the projected roof area does not exceed 120 square feet (if the roof exceeds 120 square feet, a state permit is required);
2. Fences under 6 feet high (taller fences require a state permit);
3. Retaining walls less than 4 feet high (walls over 4 feet or impounding certain liquids require a state permit);
4. Platforms, decks, walls, patios and driveways;
5. Plastering, papering and similar finish work;
6. Window awnings supported by an exterior wall (awnings projecting more than 54" require a state permit);
7. Prefabricated swimming pools (if the pool walls are entirely above adjacent grade and if the capacity exceeds 5,000 gallons, a state permit is required).

Please note that any improvements involving commercial or public buildings or electricity or plumbing on any structure or yard, require the supervision and permit application of a licensed specialized contractor, as well as a state CID permit. The Community Development Department has available a list of contractors licensed to do work in Las Vegas.

Also note that any proposed alteration (including those listed above which require a city permit) to properties designated by the City of Las Vegas as historic (zoned "CH") will require the review and approval or comments of the city's Design

Review Board (DRB). Historic property owners should see the special note on this page.

If you're still not sure if your project requires a permit, consider this very short list of what does *not* require one:

1. Professional nameplates;
2. Real estate signs under 8 feet square;
3. Temporary stage (although, depending on its use, you may need to get a special use permit; check with Community Development);
4. Painting (unless your property is in a local "CH" zone, and then it is only required if you will be changing color).

Although not part of the building permit process, another consideration as you plan your project is how the property is zoned. For example, planning to convert a single-family house into a duplex may or may not be allowable under the zoning on your property. Check the maps included with this publication to determine the present zoning for your site or contact the Community Development Department. You can apply to change the zoning on a piece of property but the activity requires a completely different process than application for building permit. Once again, contact the Community Development Department to determine the general feasibility of your project and to discuss all building and zoning requirements.

You will also need to:

1. Prepare a site plan which shows the location and set-back distances of all proposed and existing structures and property lines. The Community Development Department can provide you with

#### **Special note to historic property owners**

At this time the city of Las Vegas does not review permit applications for *all* historic structures. Some must be forwarded to the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division for review. Some historic structures will require no additional review.

If possible, locate your property on one of the maps included with this publication. If your property is in a local "CH" (Cultural/Historic) zone, you will be required to complete an application for a Certificate of Approval for the project so that it can be reviewed by the city's Design Review Board (DRB). This City Council-appointed board meets the last Wednesday of each month at 4 p.m. in the city council chambers, 1700 N. Grand Ave.

They are charged with designation, preservation, protection, enhancement and perpetuation of those structures in Las Vegas which reflect the outstanding elements of our community's culture and history. The Board reviews all proposed alterations to properties within the local CH zone and either approves or disapproves with alternative suggestions. The deadline for inclusion in the DRB's agenda is the first of the month in which you wish to meet with the board.

*continued next page*



examples;

2. Provide a sketch plan of the proposed building project showing foundation, floor and roof framing plans and elevations;
3. Submit a set of building plans (or three sets of plans if CID approval is being sought) showing all above requirements.

Complete the appropriate building permit application provided by the Community Development Department. If property is in the local historic overlay zone (CH), an application for a Design Review Board "Certificate of Approval" is required and DRB review and approval precedes granting of a building permit. Every effort will be made to consolidate the certificate of approval and building permit process for historic property owners.

### **City of Las Vegas Permit Process**

If the total valuation of the project is estimated at less than \$500 (either by a licensed contractor or by using the valuation system dictated by the Uniform Building Code), you will probably be issued a city building permit at the same time you submit your application and collateral information (1-3 above). At that time, the city will collect a building permit fee in return for which you will receive your permit and further information regarding permit display, inspections and more.

### **State of New Mexico Permit Process**

Your project will require a state permit from either CID or the state Historic Preservation Division (HPD) if:

1. The project valuation exceeds \$500 (will require CID permit) and/or
2. The property is designated historic by the state or is located within a state historic district, but is not in the local CH zone, and the project involves demolition, new construction or expends public monies (will require state HPD review regardless of project valuation; however, if the valuation of the project on an historic structure exceeds \$500, a CID permit is also applicable).

If state CID review is required, the city will forward your complete application and the permit fee (see next section) to the state office. The approved permit will be mailed directly to you within a four week period.

For projects requiring state Historic Preservation Division review, the city will forward your application to the state office, which will respond with approval or disapproval with suggested alternatives within 30 days.

### **Special note continued**

The Community Development Department can help you accurately determine the particular zoning and permit requirements for your property. It's a good idea for historic property owners to contact the Design Review Board as early as possible and certainly prior to finalizing plans in order to gain their advice. Because the board is also interested in "perpetuating" the use of Las Vegas' historic resources for the benefit of the community, property owners will find them eager to work to achieve satisfying results all around.

If your property is not in the local "CH" zone but is designated historic by the state of New Mexico or is in a state-registered district and you are planning one of the following projects, your permit application must be reviewed by the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division:

1. Demolition of a structure or portion of a structure;
2. New Construction including additions; or
3. A publicly-funded project (i.e. those undertaken with city or county funds).

At this time, alterations to state registered properties that are not in a local "CH" zone and are projects other than #1 or #2 do not require special review by an historic board or commission.

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## How long does it take to get a building permit?

A city of Las Vegas building permit for a project valued at less than \$500 can take as little as 10 minutes, if the application and supplemental information are complete when brought to the Community Development office. State permits usually take 2-3 weeks; City of Las Vegas Design Review Board approval generally requires a minimum of 30 days. State HPD approval generally requires 30 days.

Though it may seem like a long time to wait for a permit, bear in mind that in many large cities permits can be in the works for 6 months or more! However, it is beneficial to consult with the Community Development Department (and HPD if you need their approval) as you begin to plan your project, so your application is as complete as possible when you file for a permit.

## How much does a permit cost?

City of Las Vegas permits begin at \$10 for a project valued at \$500 or less.

State permits are computed based on the type of project and its valuation. Using the Building Valuation Data Sheet will get you started in computing the cost of your project's building permit. To figure the valuation of your project, multiply the square footage of the structure you are building by a Building Valuation Data Sheet provided by the Community Development Department. If the result is more than \$500, you will need to pay both the city and state building permit fee.

The City of Las Vegas uses the Uniform Building Code's 1976 fee schedule for computing city fees. See the following table "Building Permit Fees," for the city's method of computing the permit cost.

State permit fees are based on \$3 per \$1,000 up to \$15,000, and \$1 per \$1,000 over \$15,000 plus 20%. Figure the city and state permit fees separately, then deduct the cost of the state permit from the city fee to arrive at the total due the city.

A cost estimate from a licensed contractor is acceptable as a valuation.

Remember, if project valuation exceeds \$500, a state CID permit will be required.

## What happens once I get my permit?

Depending on the permit granted for your project, periodic inspections by city Code Enforcement Officers, state CID inspectors or state HPD representatives will occur. The inspections will indicate approval or disapproval before the next level of activity can occur so your building will be as safe as possible and meet applicable codes. For example, an electrical inspection will happen before dry wall is installed to assure that the wiring is safe before it is covered. A final inspection by the proper authority will be scheduled once your project is completed according to plans, and if applicable, state CID will issue a certificate of occupancy approving the project for use.

You are required to post your permit in a conspicuous place for observation by the public.

A building permit is good for 6 months from the date of issue as long as work is progressing.

### Special note to historic property owners

There is no additional fee levied on projects requiring review by the city's Design Review Board or the state Historic Preservation Division.

### Special note to commercial or public building owners and contractors

Depending on project type and valuation, additional plans explaining parking, landscaping, sanitation and other ordinance-specific requirements may be needed to get a special permit.

**Signage** for buildings requires a permit according to the City of Las Vegas Sign Ordinance, and there is mention of signs in the city's Cultural-Historic Districts Ordinance, as well. Check with the Community Development Department before you begin any work.

## In Summary

It is a very good idea to check with the city's Community Development Department any time you are planning to improve or alter your property. They'll be happy to provide you with all the information you need and answer any questions you may have. You'll find the folks in Community Development and Code Enforcement to be knowledgeable, supportive and as flexible as possible. After all, property improvements should be just that — and they'll make our houses, neighborhoods and community a safer and more pleasant place to live.

**Contact any of the organizations listed on the back cover for more information about building permits.**

## City of Las Vegas Building Permit Fees

Total Project Valuation	Fee
\$1.00 to \$500.00	\$10.00
\$501.00 to \$2,000.00	\$10.00 for the first \$500.00, plus \$1.50 for each additional \$100.00 or fraction thereof, to and including \$2,000.00
\$2,001.00 to \$25,000.00	\$32.50 for the first \$2,000.00, plus \$6.00 for each additional \$1,000.00 or fraction thereof, to and including \$25,000.00
\$25,001.00 to \$50,000.00	\$170.50 for the first \$25,000.00, plus \$4.50 for each additional \$1,000.00 or fraction thereof, to and including \$50,000.00
\$50,001.00 to \$100,000.00	\$283.00 for the first \$50,000.00, plus \$3.00 for each additional \$1,000.00 or fraction thereof, to and including \$100,000.00
\$100,001 and up	\$433.00 for the first \$100,000.00, plus \$2.50 for each additional \$1,000.00 or fraction thereof

## Key to Maps (pages 7-11)

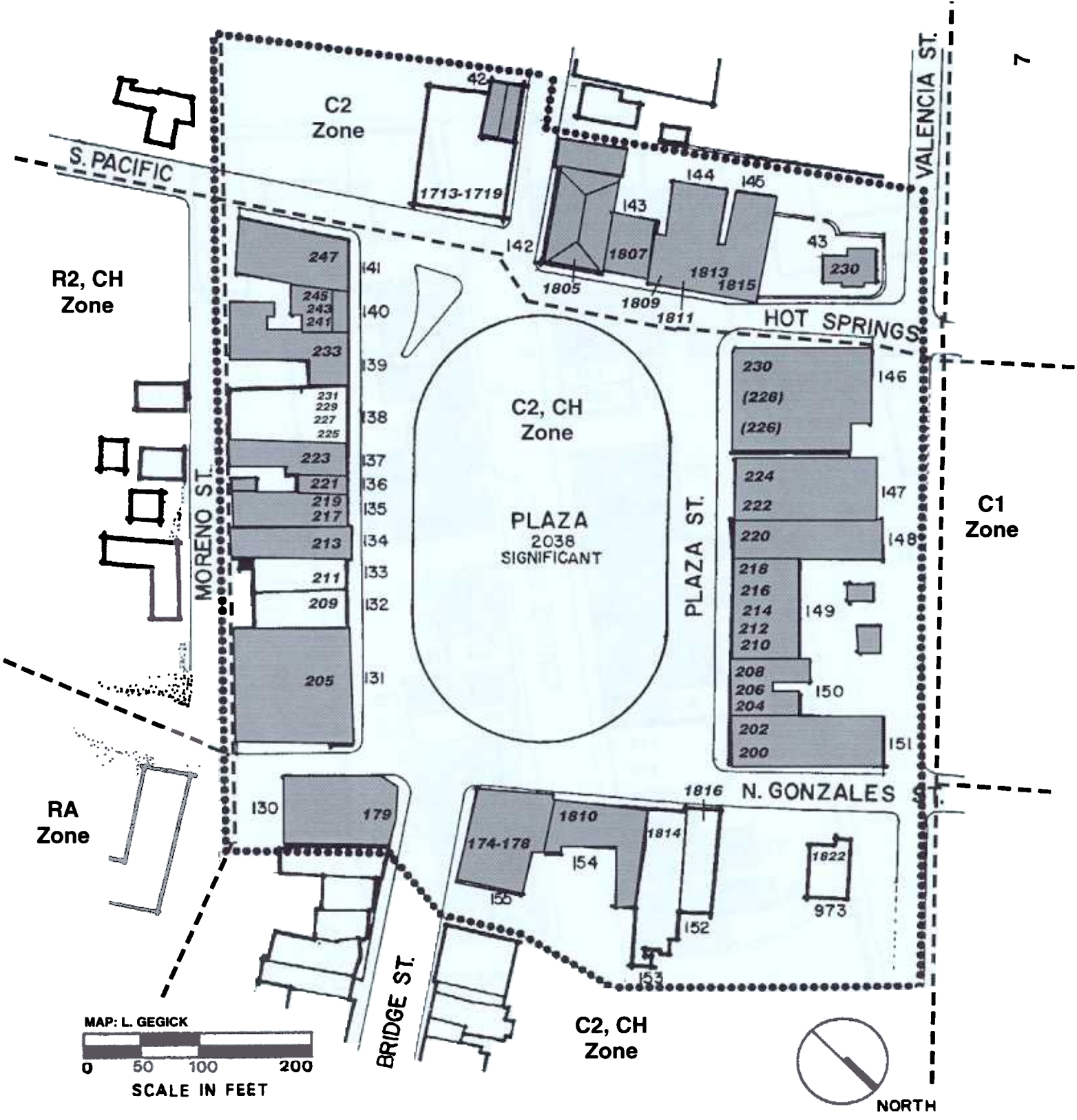
- Historic District Boundary
- - - - - Zone Boundary
-  Historic Structure Designated Significant or Contributing

See individual maps for explanation of numbers.

## Zoning Legend

- RA Residential Agricultural
- RR Restricted Residential
- R1 Single-Family Residential
- R2 Multi-Family Residential
- R3 Combination Single-Family &/or Trailers
- C1 Neighborhood Commercial
- C2 Central Business District
- C3 General Commercial
- M1 Light Industrial
- M2 Heavy Industrial
- PC Planned Community
- O1 Office Zone
- RH1 Residential Cultural
- CH Cultural Historic

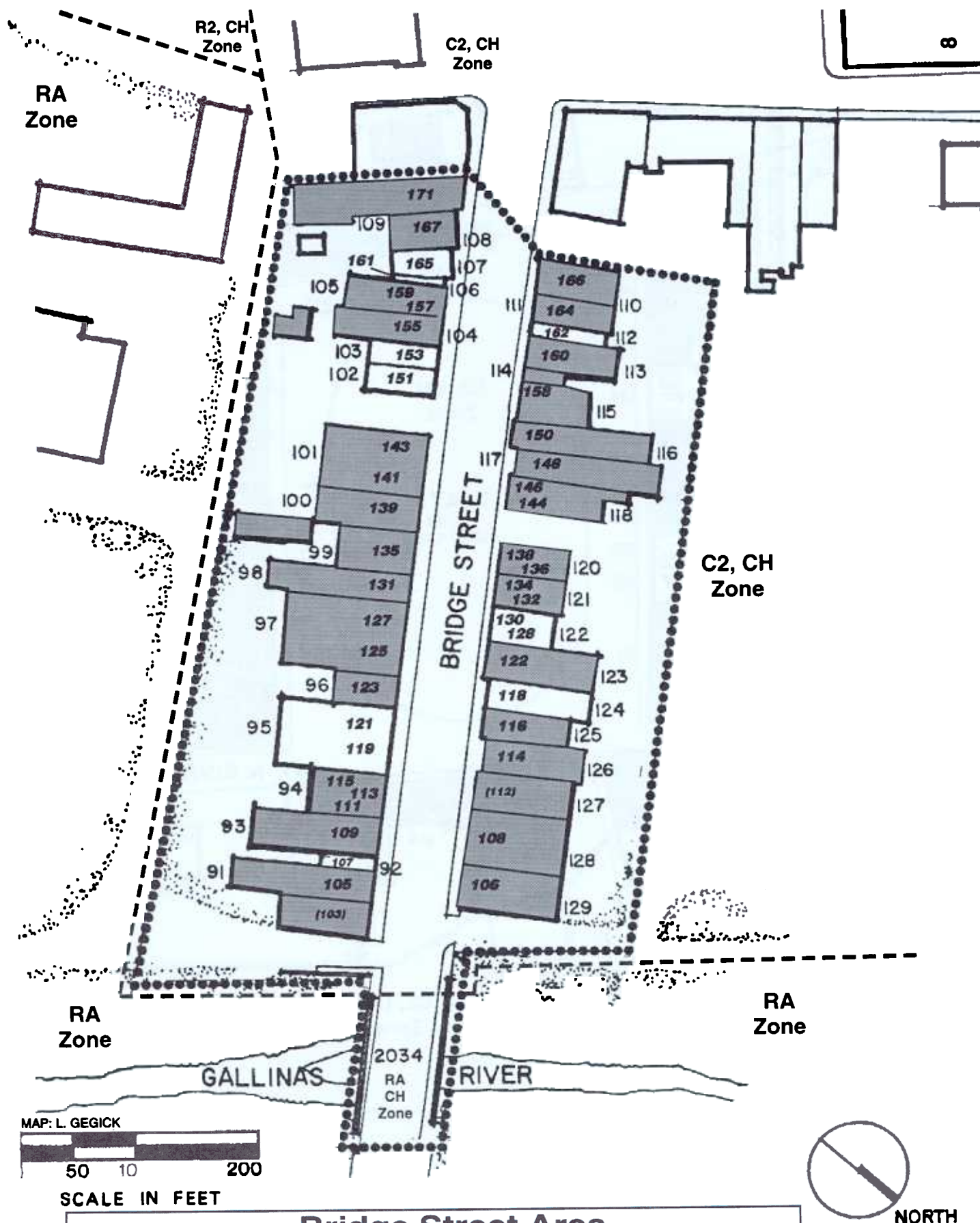




## Las Vegas Plaza

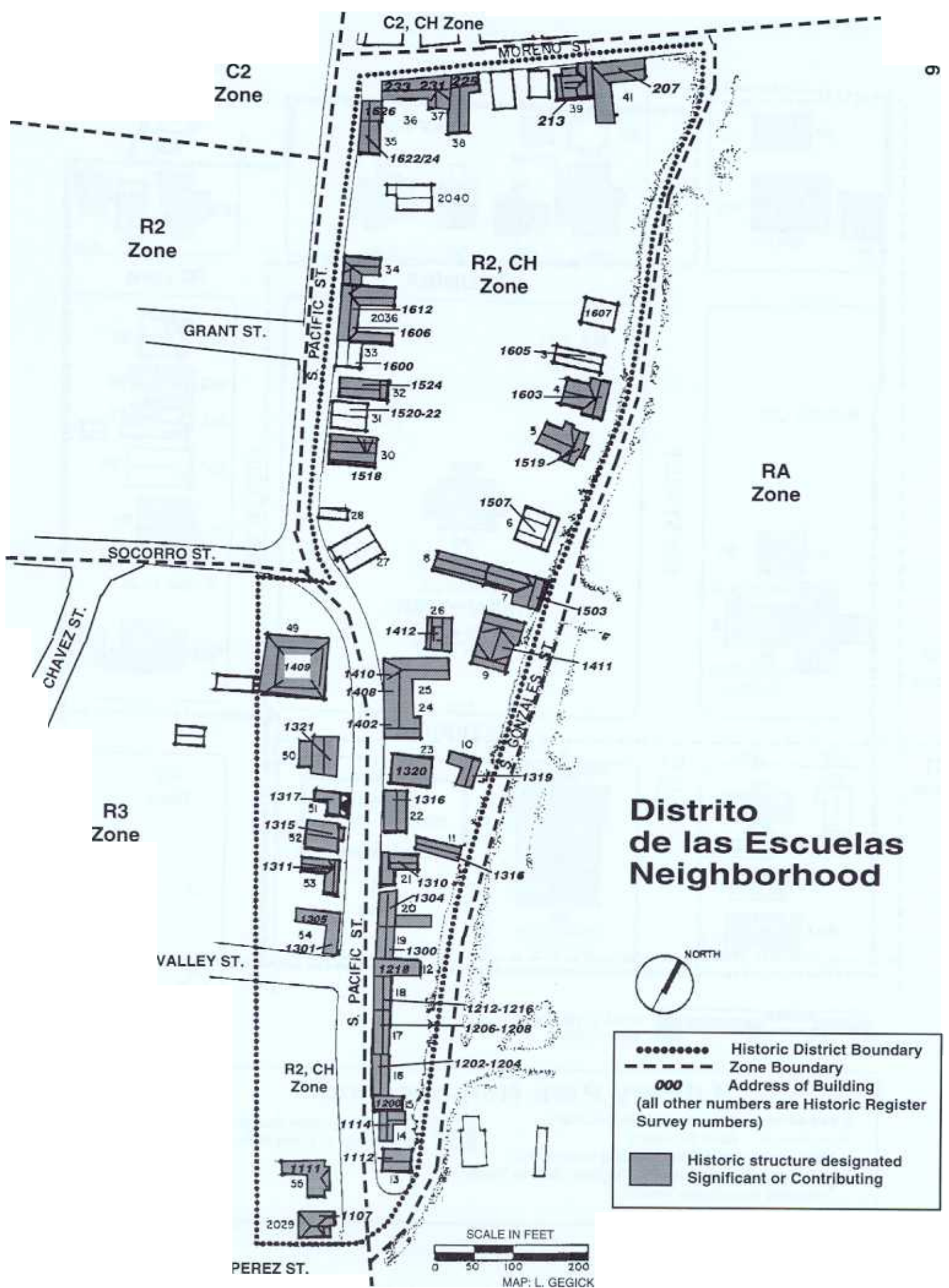
- Historic District Boundary
- - - - - Zone Boundary
- 000 Address of Building  
(all other numbers are Historic Register Survey numbers)
- Historic structure designated Significant or Contributing



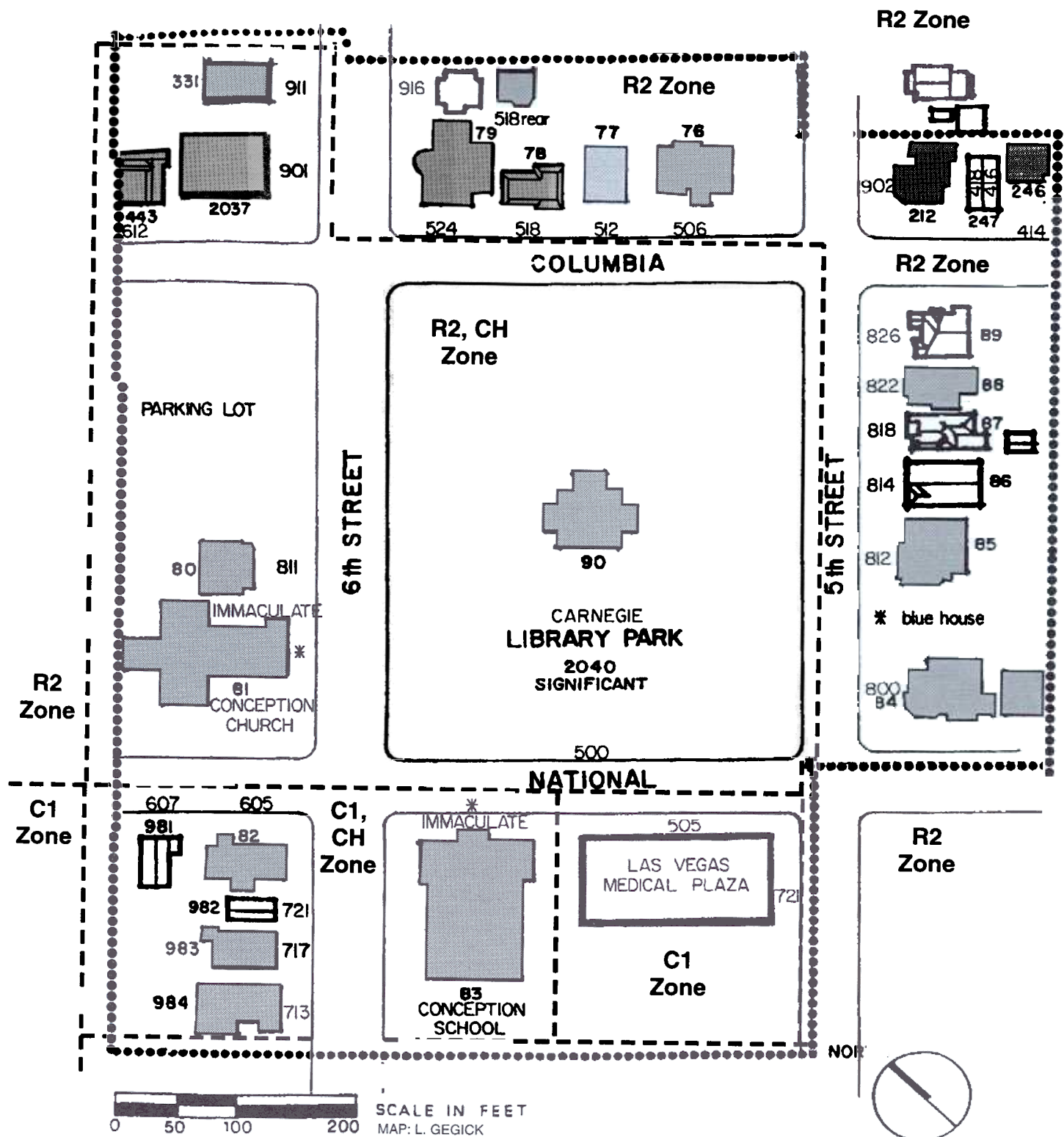


## Bridge Street Area

- Historic District Boundary
- - - - - Zone Boundary
- 000 Address of Building
- (all other numbers are Historic Register Survey numbers)
- Historic structure designated Significant or Contributing







## Library Park Neighborhood

- Historic District Boundary
- Zone Boundary
- Historic structure designated Significant or Contributing
- Larger numbers denote building addresses;  
all other numbers are Historic Register Survey numbers
- \* denotes no address posted



